

**PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PROGRESS:  
HEALTH, HYGIENE, AND HEALING IN THE STATE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE  
POVERTY-ALLEVIATION PROJECTS OF SOUTHWEST CHINA**

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis, I examine the Chinese state project of relocation and poverty alleviation in the mountain areas of Southwest China, as seen through people's lived experience in their new living spaces. From examining their perspectives of living in the new government-built houses as well as observations on their changing bodily practices and relational networks in the new villages, I aim to investigate the diverse body of discourses, processes, as well as political and economic arrangements embodied in this project in post-socialist China. I employ this approach as an attempt to shift from examining state power as a unitary force, towards an examination of the multiple processes (political/ social/ cultural/ medical) in which individuals are navigating their life through hygienic and healing practices.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Jinglin Piao was born on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1990 in Yanji, the ethnic Korean autonomous prefecture in Northeast China. Raised in the border areas between China, North Korea, Russia and Japan, she keeps persistent interest in the studies of minorities and villagers in the marginal areas. In 2012, after she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from Shanghai International Studies University, she came to Cornell University and started her graduate studies in the field of Asian Studies. With the preparation of this thesis, she tries to write down personal histories and life stories of the people living and making history on the margins.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Figure 1. Location of Yunnan and Guizhou in Southwest China

Source: *National Geographic Magazine*, July 1980, Wahsington

Figure 2. Location of Mang villages in Jinping County of Yunnan





## Chapter 1 Introduction

In the perspective of a new materialist anthropology,<sup>1</sup> bodies and lives are seen as historically contingent.<sup>2</sup> In this light, lived bodies are perceived as “contingent formations of space, time, and materiality,” as well as “assemblages of practices, discourses, images, institutional arrangements, and specific places and projects.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, embodiment is “not just an objective presence but a moment in a process that is thoroughly social and historical and hence diverse.”<sup>4</sup>

Inspired by these ideas, I examine the Chinese state project of relocation and poverty alleviation through the affected people’s lived experience in new spaces. From their perspectives of living in the new government-built houses as well as their changing bodily practices and relational networks in the new villages, I aim to investigate a diverse body of discourses, processes, as well as political and economic arrangements embodied in this project of post-socialist China. I employ this approach as an attempt to shift from examining state power as a unitary force towards an examination of the multiple processes (political/ social/ cultural/ medical) in which individuals are navigating their life and situation.

Everyday life is suffused with discourses,<sup>5</sup> but also contradictions.<sup>6</sup> This thesis is also based on the discussion about the contradictions in villagers’ everyday life. Whereas “the region’s [the high borderlands of socialist China, Vietnam, and Laos] state programs are attuned

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<sup>1</sup> Different from political economy and biological anthropology, the new materialism for anthropology is neither economistic nor reductive. Neither is its analysis confined to traditional concerns of symbols and significance. Instead, it is a materialist anthropology of embodiment, which studies cultural/ natural/ historical variations through lived bodies and material practice, such as eating, medical procedures, and forms of subjectivity, which produce contingent forms of embodiment. See Lock & Farquhar, 2007, Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Lock & Farquhar, 2007, Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Lock & Farquhar, 2007, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Lock & Farquhar, 2007, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Farquhar, 2002, Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> Brotherton, 2012, Preface.

to growth and progress,”<sup>7</sup> the new formations of bodily and living problems in new villages are defying the socialist/ post-socialist ideals of progress and livelihoods. As life in the new villages is going on, people however are finding it increasingly difficult to respond to their new living environment and illnesses. In this context, I try to analyze different (and sometimes conflicting) discourses of the state, but also tease out “many discrepancies among the multiple realities of people’s lived experience.”<sup>8</sup>

## Background

The particular relocation project that I will focus on, which I will call the Mang project, was part of a series of government-led poverty-alleviation efforts directed at ethnic minorities in the recent two decades. Many of these efforts orchestrated by the Chinese government have been directed towards the mountain areas where ethnic minorities are mostly concentrated in Yunnan and other parts of Southwest China, on the borders with Vietnam, Laos, and Burma.<sup>9</sup>

In this thesis, I regard these poverty-alleviation projects as critical moments of multiple processes that not only shape these border-land peoples’ lives and identities but also in which they themselves actively participate in the formation of their subjectivities.

In the early 1950s, the newly-founded government of the Peoples’ Republic of China urgently needed the support and cooperation of cross-border ethnic groups, in order to stabilize its regime, which was challenged by multiple pressures from hostile forces abroad.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it

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<sup>7</sup> Forsyth & Michaud, 2011, p.6.

<sup>8</sup> Brotherton, 2012, p. xxii.

<sup>9</sup> See cases in this special report in *Yunnan Daily* [http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content\\_403994.htm](http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content_403994.htm), last accessed on April 1, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> See in Wang, 1999. The hostile forces indicate Guomindang agents lurking in the borderlands and working to undermine the Chinese Communist Party’s regime. According to Wang’s memoir and my interview with another retired official of the Yunnan government who used to work in the ethnic minority areas in Yunnan, the heads of some ethnic groups communicated with the Kuomintang agents and

took the measure of “direct transition” (*zhijie guodu*), rather than the radical land reform, as a way of social transformation in these ethnic communities, and claimed that these ethnic groups advanced to the socialist society directly from the primitive. Thereafter, these border-landers of Yunnan province were referred to as “*zhiguo minzu*” (direct-transition ethnic groups) in government parlance. This differentiation actually implied *zhiguo minzu*’s longtime primitivism and associated poverty, and according to this logic was followed by aid from the government.<sup>11</sup>

This historical change took place against the background of early socialist China, where a newborn government emphasized political stability in addition to economic development.

In this thesis, sixty years after the “direct transition” era, I discuss the present-day situation of these mountain people, located at the intersecting discourses and practices of poverty-alleviation and economic development. Within this context, I detail their increasing interactions with the institutions of this state. A plurality of agencies are involved in the everyday life of these border-landers. Among these, I focus on their healing practices and explore how individual villagers are navigating and negotiating different spheres of life in the hope of achieving physical and material well-being. Building on this discussion, I argue that individual villagers’ pragmatism and pluralism of their healing practices could not be decoupled from their pragmatic engagement in poverty-alleviation and development projects. At the same time, their

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escaped to neighboring countries such as Burma in the 1950s. Also see Chang, 2001, about a case of the Guomindang Yunnanese Chinese.

<sup>11</sup> As the Chinese communist government defines, in the early 1950s, “*zhiguo minzu*” skipped the class society and leaped forward to the socialist society directly under the leadership of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and with the help of the Chinese communist government that was newly founded in the October of 1949. These ethnic areas are called as “*zhiguo diqu*” (the areas of direct transition). Officials, cadres, soldiers, and professionals (including doctors) were sent to this area to distribute food to ethnic minorities in the deep mountains, to build shelters and huts for them, to teach them new methods of farming, and to offer them medical treatment. This policy of “direct transition” exempted 660,000 ethnic minorities in these areas from the land reform at that time. See “*Zhizheng Zhongguo*” (governing china) by *zhonggong zhongyang dangshi yanjiushi* (the central office of CCP history research). This book is accessible online: <http://www.zgdsw.org.cn/GB/218994/219014/220570/222739/14739104.html>, last accessed on April 1, 2014.

culture, in the sense of traditional practices in the past spaces, are reformulated in the present, in the face of the challenges of the present. To sum up, my argument about contingent formations of life is embedded in the anthropological concern about how mountain villagers abandon, or continue and reformulate their old ways of thinking and acting in their new situations.

## **Fieldwork**

This thesis is based on field investigations in mountain villages in Jinping County of Yunnan Province, China, on the border with Vietnam. With a population of 330,000, among which 86% are members of ethnic minorities and 92.48% live in rural areas, Jinping County tops China poverty-alleviation agenda. In February of 2011, I visited the Mang villages in Jinping after first reading about the Mang project online. Two years later, I went back to the Mang villages and undertook field excursions to more mountain villages, including those of ethnic Yi, Yao, Lahu, and Miao people in Jinping in the summer of 2013, to continue my research on the everyday life of the border-landers. I choose Mang villages as the primary sites for this research because government cadres' intervention was intensive and extensive in the Mang project, and this distinction is of particular interest to my study on mountain villagers' hygiene practices after their relocation.

The Mang is an ethnic group of seven hundred people currently living in China, which is also represented on the Vietnamese side of the border. Chinese mass media have referred to them as the last group of people still leading primitive life in China, and hence in need of government aid to end their primitive way of life.<sup>12</sup> Their relocation down from the mountain to a lower

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<sup>12</sup> See these online Chinese media reports:  
[http://gzdaily.dayoo.com/html/2009-07/03/content\\_621577.htm##](http://gzdaily.dayoo.com/html/2009-07/03/content_621577.htm##)  
<http://www.chinanews.com/cul/news/2009/06-18/1739334.shtml>  
[http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2011-09/05/c\\_121979639.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2011-09/05/c_121979639.htm)

elevation was, accordingly, acclaimed as an important step that the government took to help the Mang to end their primitive life, and rescue them from of extreme poverty. In 2009, following the Mang project blueprint, all of four Mang villages in separate mountain areas were re-arranged into three new villages (three of them were moved to two new locations, the other one was reconstructed in its original location). The Mang were moved from their previous shelters and huts into new houses that government built for them, for free. These three new Mang villages are named Longfeng Village, Pinghe Village, and Niuchangping Village.

In every one of three new Mang villages a task force of two government cadres was stationed to take responsibility for supervising every detail of Mang villagers' new life after the relocation and in implementing new ways of agricultural production. In addition to basic construction and maintenance work in the new villages, these resident cadres conducted a series of hygienic programs targeting alcoholism and what was labeled as unhygienic practices.<sup>13</sup> For example, they made specific regulations and punishment to regulate Mang people's drinking and personal hygiene habits. This included making sure they do not drink during daytime and that they trim their nails.<sup>14</sup>

This kind of hygienic governance intervention lasted for two years, and the resident cadres left for good at the end of 2011. Yet, their intervention effectively shaped a new model of border citizens that is attached to a particular notion of progress. Thus, in my opinion, the

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[http://www.hh.cn/news\\_1/xw02/201212/t20121219\\_410881.html](http://www.hh.cn/news_1/xw02/201212/t20121219_410881.html)  
[http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=7S99FVPqsviCzTX8V4geBgndR2ZtEWJa51ZEgzTj4bgOLzUcov\\_zsH371gBNeLS5EqAmRnEz-af8tbd92M9HEa](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=7S99FVPqsviCzTX8V4geBgndR2ZtEWJa51ZEgzTj4bgOLzUcov_zsH371gBNeLS5EqAmRnEz-af8tbd92M9HEa), all of them last accessed on April 1, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> The resident cadres of the Mang project left for good at the end of 2011 after two years' work in the Mang villages since 2009. Their job was specified in an official document named "Jin Ping Xian Mang Ren Zong He Fu Pin Xiang Mu Hou Xu Guan Li Gong Zuo Ji Hua."

<sup>14</sup> I consider anti-alcoholism part of the hygienic campaign because in Chinese notions "weisheng" (guarding life, translated as hygiene later) and "yangsheng" (nurturing life) overlapped within the same matrix of meanings before the twentieth century. According to Rogaski, many percepts and admonitions associated with guarding life begin with warning about the dangers of wine and anything done in excess, such as alcoholism. (2004, p.45-46 & p.123)

hygienic governance in the Mang project is a perfect field to examine how state projects and regulations are shaping and forming people's identities and subjectivities. At the same time, I attend to how border-landers are adapting to and maneuvering through such regulations.

## Methodology

It is true that state power and ideology can act upon individuals and their bodies. However, one of the objectives of this thesis is to challenge the official discourse of hygiene that has been applied to these bodies. Reading through news reports on the Mang project and other poverty-alleviation projects in “direct-transition areas,”<sup>15</sup> one can easily discern that the media never fail to highlight what is said to be the lack of hygiene in these mountain people's practices. Some international projects in Jinping were also devoted to solving hygienic problems.<sup>16</sup> In these contexts, hygienic problems never fail to account for the mountain villagers' diseases and poor health. However, in the interviews with villagers, I heard different stories. Villagers' oral histories can better “capture all the diversity of individual experiences,”<sup>17</sup> and these border-landers' embodied memories of their health and healing contribute to their bodily lives while combining myriad threads from the past and the present.

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<sup>15</sup> See a summary of more relocation projects on ethnic minorities in mountains of Yunnan: [http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content\\_403994.htm](http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content_403994.htm), last accessed on April 1, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> From 1993 to 2007, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) brought 11 poverty-alleviation projects to Jinping County from international organizations like UNDP, WFP, IFAD, UNFPA and national governments of Germany, Norway and Italy. Through the poverty-reduction counterpart relationship between the MFA and Jinping, 24 million (RMB) were channeled to Jinping to carry out health and hygiene projects ranging from drinking water for men and livestock to village clinics construction. See in *A Living Memory—A chronological model of designated poverty alleviation efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Jinping County*.

<sup>17</sup> Waterson, 2007, Introduction.

The approach I apply here is in the same vein as the search for “a genealogy of individual bodily practices,”<sup>18</sup> which offers not only “an analytical lens through which to examine the lived experience of bodies,” but also “a theoretical lexicon to examine the sometimes contradictory and overlapping relationships among the individual practices of everyday citizens, economic reform, and state power.”<sup>19</sup> Brotherton defines individual practices as “the complex ways in which individuals communicate, improvise, enact, and revise ideology.”<sup>20</sup> Following these thoughts, I attend to how mountain villagers improvise and revise the concept of hygienic modernity, and by extension, the ideal of socialism, which were introduced to them from the outside.

On the one hand, I acknowledge the disciplinary and modernizing power of hygiene; on the other hand, in this thesis I try to move beyond the dualisms of domination/ docile bodies and modernity/ tradition. Although hygiene used to be a colonial strategy to construct modern subject,<sup>21</sup> I propose this topic in a converging context of poverty-alleviation and economic development of mountain areas, and in doing so, I argue that hygiene is integral to China’s project of integrating mobile border-landers into the majority Chinese population and society through encouraging a general enthusiasm for progress. In other words, this particular project of hygiene fosters a specific system of values and ideals in today’s mountain villages.

## **Structure**

There are three parts to this thesis: first, the brief history and overview of poverty-alleviation and relocation projects in Southwest China, especially in Jinping county; second, a discussion of the

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<sup>18</sup> Brotherton, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Brotherton, 2012, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> See Burke, 2006.

concept of hygiene and hygienic modernity as introduced to the mountain people of this region; third, a discussion of mountain peoples' healing practices in the new environment after relocation.

In the beginning chapter, I present the historical processes and diverse discourses in which poverty-alleviation projects have had important roles in mountain villagers' life and their subsequent identities. Next, I focus on the Mang people's hygienic modernity, and describe how their notions of hygiene were based on the Chinese government's hygienic infrastructure and governance, in which government cadres' supervising and educating were critical. In this chapter, both hygiene campaigns and sanitation constructions are under discussion, and in doing so, I not only examine the Mang project from the lived experience of villagers; also, I point out the significance of a panoramic view of the new villages. In this way, I explore how the new concepts of hygiene anchor notions of physical wellbeing and national identity, in the interface between poverty-alleviation and health-promotion. In the end, I try to understand the meanings of mountain villagers' diseases and remedies within the wider context of their historical struggles over power and resources.

In recent years, herbal medicine, local treatment, and biomedicine as well as hospitalization all have come to inform their healing practices, and villagers would not discard any of these possibilities for healing. I relate this medical pluralism and pragmatism to the villagers' pragmatic engagement in making a living. This association derives from the correlation that the villagers discern between their growing illness and their increasing consumption of biomedicine, and by extension, their predicament in complicated networks as their economic activities are increasingly dependent on the relations with the institutions and business investment from the outside of mountains.



In the last chapter, based on the Mang's reflections on their everyday life, I question the progress of sweeping changes engendered by the poverty-alleviation projects, and pinpoint the mountain villagers' loss of vitality and power in the process of their engagement with hygienic modernity, modern biomedicine, as well as the state projects of poverty-alleviation and relocation.

## Chapter 2 Poverty-Alleviation

Historically, ethnic minorities in the mountain areas under discussion have been described by the neighboring lowland states as primitive;<sup>22</sup> it is only more recently that they have also been generally associated with poverty and backwardness. Nevertheless, in today's state logic, the primitive state and the longtime poverty of these ethnic groups are conceptually intertwined and each is assumed to be the shadow of the other.

In the long line of Chinese imperial history, people in the borderlands were recorded as “barbarians,” marked by savageness and cruelty, and in doing so, lowland states could feel more justified assuming the obligation to conquer and to govern “barbaric” border-landers. For instance, in the Ming dynasty of imperial China, the Yao in the Southwestern borderlands were depicted as recalcitrant barbarians “who both resisted Sinification (*hanhua*) and refused incorporation into the Chinese political order.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, “The view of non-Han peoples as ‘barbarians’ (*Man, Yi, or Fan*) which we usually associate with the bygone imperial Chinese world system—what is today officially called ‘great *Han* chauvinism’—is not dead in China.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet, in the modern history of nation states, official histories are more likely to generalize about these border-landers as people of poverty and backwardness. This characterization is supported by economic indicators, such as gross domestic product (GDP) and net income per capita, and the government statistically demonstrates considerable evidence of poverty. For example, in Jinping (officially named the Miao, Yao and Dai Autonomous County of Jinping),

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<sup>22</sup> Scott, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Litzinger, 1995, “Making Histories: Contending Concepts of the Yao Past.” In Stevan Harrell, ed. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 1995, p.127.

<sup>24</sup> McKhann, 1995, “The Naxi and the Nationalities Question.” In Stevan Harrell, ed. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, 1995, p.42.

86% of the population are ethnic minorities living in rural areas. From 1992 to 2007, Jinping was designated as the subject of a poverty-alleviation project of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA; this under the Chinese system of assigning responsibility for development in different impoverished areas to different government bureaucracies even though they are not necessarily specialized in poverty alleviation).

In the official reports on MFA's poverty-alleviation projects, Jinping was introduced as extremely poor: "Up until 2006, the population fell below the absolute poverty line, which stood at 668 yuan [100 USD] of per capita net income. This portion of the population registered 68,600, accounting for 20.34% of the total population. The low-income population that had a net per capita income ranging from 668 yuan to 924 yuan totaled 83,800."<sup>25</sup> This shows that ethnic minority peoples' poverty is interpreted in specific economic terms, and the meaning of poverty is regarded as signified by these statistical numbers.

### **"Zhiguo Minzu" (Direct-Transition Ethnic Minorities)**

In my analysis, this descriptive transition from a primitive state to poverty indicates the shift in the central state's concern, from its political, social and cultural superiority over the borderlanders to an emphasis on economic development. In the course of this shift, these borderlanders were labeled "zhiguo minzu" (direct-transition ethnic minorities) when the new Chinese Communist government's concern of political stability was dominant in the borderlands in the 1950s.<sup>26</sup> At that point of time, Guomindang agents, with the purpose of undermining the communist government's efforts to win ethnic groups' trust and support, were lurking across the borders and communicated with heads of ethnic groups who were afraid that the Communist

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<sup>25</sup> See *A Living Memory—A chronological model of designated poverty alleviation efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Jinping County*, p.6.

<sup>26</sup> See Wang, 1999, also refer to Michaud, 2009.

regime would exterminate both their lives and local self-governance. Due to their fear of the Communist government's radical social reform, some heads of ethnic groups, along with their armed forces, left for neighboring countries.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, although the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propagated the new Communist government's policy of ethnic equality and against the discrimination or oppression of ethnic groups, some local people still took a hostile attitude towards the friendly approach of the CCP officials who took pains to express their sincere desire to offer help and aid to ethnic groups in the borderlands.<sup>28</sup> In the face of these internal and external tensions, the CCP decided to conduct a "New Democratic Revolution" in these ethnic communities, but by means of "direct transition," rather than a progressive land reform.

In the early 1950s (the high time of socialism in China), the CCP sought to eradicate the exploiting class, such as landlords, and achieve socialism through redistributing their lands. This was a progressive way of land reform in most places except *zhiguo* areas. Realizing the complexity of political stability in these areas, the CCP compelled to adjust its reform. In other words, *zhiguo minzu* were exempt from the socialist land reform in the 1950s. These ethnic areas were called the "zhiguo diqu" (direct-transition areas). Although the land tenure systems in *zhiguo diqu* have been reformed later during the Cultural Revolution and post-Maoist era, customary land uses by mountain people have continued to operate.

According to official Chinese history, *zhiguo minzu* skipped the theoretically expected stages of class society and leaped directly from the primitive to the socialist society, under the direct leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. This social leap was realized in the way that CCP took "unity, production, progress" as guidelines to assist the ethnic minorities in the deep

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<sup>27</sup> See examples and stories in Wang Lianfang's memoir about his work in direct transition areas in this period.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

mountains in adopting a new social structure, learning new techniques of farming, and receiving government aid to achieve these ends. Officials, cadres, soldiers, and professionals (including doctors) were sent to *zhiguo diqu*, and took pains to hand out food (especially salt), and clothes, to win popular support. This was the primary form of poverty-alleviation at this early stage.

### **Moral Valence**

More interestingly, this kind of government aid was interpreted as if carrying a moral valence, that is to say, the Chinese people and government were historically indebted to ethnic minorities in the borderlands and hence should apologize and pay back these ethnic groups by helping them to improve their living conditions.

This moralistic rhetoric, in one sense, was in the discourse of history that these ethnic groups had offered the CCP military help to combat the GMD forces; in the other sense, the CCP assumed the role as inheritor of the Chinese state, thus having the responsibility to atone for the wrong made against these ethnic groups by Chinese imperial powers and the GMD government.

Zhou Enlai, the first prime minister of the Chinese Communist government, emphasized the necessity of this kind of apologetic attitude when officials worked in the ethnic areas.<sup>29</sup> However, this kind of moral interpretation is not mentioned anymore in today's poverty-alleviation projects. Instead, the necessity of economic development dominates in the poverty-alleviation discourse, and the expectation has instead become that ethnic minorities should be grateful for the Party's and the government's aid.

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<sup>29</sup> This apologetic attitude was called *Pei Bushi* (“赔不是”) in Chinese. See *Zhou Enlai Tongyi Zhanxian Wenxuan* 周恩来统一战线文选.

From the above, it can be argued that poverty-alleviation in the early socialist China, endowed with a generous attitude, was embedded in the government's main efforts to achieve political stability in the borderlands during that special period of consolidation.

In the meanwhile, government-organized ethnic classification projects were undertaken by teams of Chinese anthropologists and historians in the 1950s, who mapped out mountain people in remote areas by classifying them into officially recognized ethnic groups.<sup>30</sup> Also, they made great efforts to persuade these mountain border-landers to settle down in the social structure of "natural villages," which had been one of administrative systems of highland peoples since the 1950s.<sup>31</sup>

From a critical perspective, through this re-settlement, border-landers were positioned in a liminal position in the new national order. For the agents of the state, the rationale was the necessity of transforming them from mobile hunters and gatherers into settled borderland citizens, from the stereotyped "barbarians" of the past to poor people needing aid and oversight. Although this national order is historically recent, it is presented as ancient and natural.<sup>32</sup> In this kind of order, borderlands were understood to be a locus of social aberration, and by extension, a zone of pollution. The idea of pollution was associated with the sexual metaphor of peripheral people as women in the Chinese civilizing projects.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Keyes (2002), Tapp, (2002), and Mullaney (2011). Also, Harrell (1995) wrote about it that "[this] project, which occupied its participants for several years and still is not complete, involved sending teams of researchers to all areas of the country where local people had claimed status as a separate minzu, and evaluating their claims ostensibly according to Stalin's criteria, but in many cases also considering traditional Han folk categories, and sometimes giving weight to the people's own ethnic consciousness." (p.23)

<sup>31</sup> See Yin, 2001, Fiskesjö translated. "Just like other highland peoples of this region, the Bulang people have also, since the 1950s, experienced three different administrative systems: the district/township/village system; the commune/ brigade/ team system; and the township/administrative village/ natural village system." (p.152)

<sup>32</sup> Anderson 1991, cited in Malkki 1995, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> See more in Harrell, 1995. "Introduction: Civilizing projects and the reaction to them." In Stevan Harrell, ed. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. (p.3-36)

*[Peripheral] peoples, like women, are seen as polluting—both dirty and dangerous—at least in the ideologies of the China-centered projects. Women, of course, are seen as polluting in Chinese folk ideologies generally (Ahern 1975); menstruating women or those who have recently given birth are offensive to the gods of popular religion, and their presence or that of others who have recently had contact with them chases the gods away. This idea of pollution—dirt and danger—is also extended to minorities. Lack of sanitation is one of the points Han ethnologists almost always bring up when they are swapping stories about fieldwork in peripheral regions; I once heard an informal exposition on this point that began with ‘Each minzu has its own zangfa [way of being dirty]...’ And Diamond has pointed out graphically that Miao people, particularly Miao women, have been thought by their Han neighbors to be especially adept in the art of poisoning by magical means (1988). In all these cases, the peripheral peoples are dangerous in the same ways women are dangerous; by their power to pollute.*

*-- Harrell, 1995, Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*

In the 1950s, in this process of classification and re-settlement, border-landers came to terms with a new nation dominated by Han Chinese, and were made to acknowledge their new political status as ethnic minorities. All the subsequent policies of benefits towards the minorities have been based on these foundations. The government claimed that these policies and aids improved the minority peoples' health, hygiene, housing, education opportunities and the like, and were undertaken in consideration of their long-lasting poverty and backwardness. But actually, these policies reinforced the above-mentioned new national order.

In terms of the theoretical framework, both the “direct transition” and “ethnic classification” were set in terms of the dominant evolutionist approach to social development.

Ethnic communities in the borderlands were determined to be primitive or feudal societies that, in the progression of social development stages, had long lagged behind the rest of the nation.

Their histories were framed in a linear way, suggesting that all human societies begin with primitive society, and then go through a process of slave society, feudalism, moving through capitalism to socialism and, finally, communism. “Definition of a *minzu* depends on Stalin’s four characteristics of a nationality (common territory, language, economy, and psychological nature), while scaling depends on the particular stage in the universal progression of history (the primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist, and socialist modes of production) that people have reached at the time of classification.”<sup>34</sup> The official history of socialist China never fails to believe that sooner or later, all peoples, regardless of culture, language, or nationality, will arrive at this final stage of political and social development—Communism. Similar to the national order, the communist social theory positions ethnic minorities living in the forests at lower levels of social evolution. In this grand frame of unilinear evolution, state power claims effective means to move and lead primitive ethnic minorities in deep mountains towards the more advanced society represented by today’s socialist China. In this context, border-landers can be illustrated as poor people in general terms, and the mountain people’s material and physical well-being will depend heavily on how they come to terms with the state projects.

### **Economic Development**

Since the 1990s, as economic development became the central focus of Chinese government policies, poverty alleviation has been closely connected with development projects. In the case of Jinping County, poverty alleviation also intersected with social and economic reconstruction

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<sup>34</sup> In Harrell, 1995. "Introduction: Civilizing projects and the reaction to them." In Stevan Harrell, ed. *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*, p. 23.



after wars and conflicts for nearly forty years, and which continued even after CCP's *Liberation of Yunnan Province* in the year of 1950. People in Jinping had a part in the experience of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, through their assistance to the Vietnamese in fighting the French, as well as of the American War in Vietnam, and the war which is in China called the Self-Defense war counterattacking Vietnam, which did not come to a final end until the late 1980s.

Against this historical background, in 1992, “[i]n order to help Jinping get rid of poverty at an early date, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), in response to the call of the Chinese Central Party Committee, designated Jinping as a long-term poverty alleviation county.”<sup>35</sup> In the official records of this fifteen-year poverty-alleviation project of MFA, Jinping is introduced in this way:

*Up until 2006,...431 villager groups[villages] still could not be reached by highways. 340 villager groups had no access to electricity while 794 villager groups had no access to program-controlled telephones. However, Jinping, this magical land, boasts rich resources. The first is natural resources. The sharply varying altitudes here lead to a special climate where you may see four seasons at different sea levels at one mountain, and experience different weather conditions in two places just 5km apart. The average annual rainfall here registers 2,330 mm, with the average annual temperature standing at 18°C, making Jinping an ideal place for growing cash crops including amomum tsao-ko [a kind of spice used in cooking and having medical value], banana and rubber. 900,000 mu of land can be reclaimed into arable land. Jinping's*

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<sup>35</sup> See in *A Living Memory—A chronological model of designated poverty alleviation efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in Jinping County*, p.3. The MFA has raised 80.0634 million yuan of poverty alleviation fund and carried out 268 projects in Jinping, covering education, health, water management, soil improvement, planting and breeding industries, environmental protection, housing, credit, training and etc.

*630,000 mu of watershed national-grade nature reserve is a gene bank with 2,567 species of 913 genera of 233 families of high plants and 63 different kinds of plants under state protection category. Among the plants, there are wild vegetables, spices, herbs and wild flowers which, if they are developed, could bring high economic returns. The second is the rich reserve of non-ferrous metals. The reserve of nickel, gold, copper, iron and tin has been proved to be in large quantity, with the reserve of gold hitting 30 tons, copper 1 million tons and iron 20 million tons. The potential value of non-ferrous metals is expected to reach over 30 billion yuan. The third is abundant hydropower resource. The average annual runoff of the rivers featuring Tengtiaojiang and Honghe stands at 7.4 billion m<sup>3</sup>, with a theoretical hydropower reserve of 2.074 million kw, among which, 900,000 kw can be developed, and over 500,000 kw of which has been exploited. The fourth is its geographical advantage of being a border county. Along the 502 km of boundary line lie the national Jinshuihe Port, three border trade marketplaces and 66 border crossings. The fifth is colorful ethnic and folk culture. The border ethnic cultures developed in the long history by eight ethnic groups and Mang tribe certainly has great business potential.*

*---- Excerpt from "An Overview of Jinping"<sup>36</sup>*

On the one hand, Jinping's poor conditions were specifically pointed out; on the other hand, natural resources and economic potential of Jinping were also highlighted. These two aspects of Jinping seem to suggest that poverty-alleviation is greatly dependent on the use of natural resource (if not resource exploitation). In another sense, they indicate the necessity of initiating more and more development projects based on the natural resources of the mountain people's area, as a way of poverty alleviation.

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<sup>36</sup> See *A Living Memory*, p.6.

In conclusion, from the primitive state to poverty, from political stability to economic development, this historical overview of poverty alleviation in Southwest China demonstrates multiple threads of historical process and political discourse.

The following example to be discussed in depth, the Mang project, can be seen as another embodiment of these contingent processes and discourses, but in a new context. Over the past decade, relocation of settlements is increasingly included in poverty-alleviation projects in Yunnan province of Southwest China.<sup>37</sup> With the assumption that mountains are barely able to provide the conditions for sustaining a livelihood, not to mention a sufficient and acceptable livelihood, the government's undertaking of relocating mountain people to a new location and a new environment (or at least in new houses), is now often considered to be a necessary step. The relocation of ethnic groups, especially ethnic groups with only small populations, as well as housing improvement and infrastructure construction in villages, has become the primary part of poverty-alleviation projects in Yunnan. For example, the relocation of the Kucong people (1100 people of 200 households) in Zhenyuan County in 2007, the relocation of the Yao (Shan Yao, literally mountain Yao) in Funing County in 2011, as well as infrastructure constructions in the Jinuo villages in Jinghong area since 2000.<sup>38</sup>

The following example is the 2009 project for the relocation of the Mang, in Jinping, Yunnan.

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<sup>37</sup> Similar kinds of development relocation in mountain areas are also happening in other parts of Southeast Asia. For example, in Laos, "resettlement of ethnic minorities has become a central feature of the rural feature of the rural development." (p.937, Olivier Evrand & Yves Goudinea, *Planned Resettlement, Unexpected Migrations and Cultural Trauma in Laos*)

<sup>38</sup> See [http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content\\_403994.htm](http://yndaily.yunnan.cn/html/2011-07/26/content_403994.htm), last accessed April 1, 2014.

## The Mang Project

The Mang project began under the directive of “lifting the Mang people out of extreme poverty” issued by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao in January of 2008. In this project, the government promised the Mang new houses for free. Additionally, after their relocation, they were given monthly basic living allowances as social welfare and government aid to the poor.

The Mang used to live in deep mountains located between Yunnan in China and Lai Châu in Vietnam. Their areas were so remote, that they were mostly inaccessible for outsiders; thus, the Mang people were relatively unknown in Chinese history and lived an extremely secluded life. In 1957, the Mang had their first significant contact with other ethnic minorities in the same mountains, after the new Chinese communist government was successful in finding them and persuading them to settle down instead of continuing their hunting and gathering practices.<sup>39</sup>

There were few records of the Mang in the next forty years, until the late 1990s, when a Chinese anthropologist and official began to write about the Mang and published a book, in 2004.<sup>40</sup> His ethnographical book not only unveiled the Mang’s migrations in history, their social structures, cosmology, mythology, farming tools, taboos and medicines, but also enumerated his own efforts to improve the Mang’s agricultural production and livelihood while serving as a government’s official in Jinping County. In this book, similar to the official histories that depict the border-landers as either barbarians or the poor in order to justify the state’s intervention in the remote borderlands, the Mang were qualified as people in need of further aid from the Chinese government as well.

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<sup>39</sup> Yang, 2004, p.35-38.

<sup>40</sup> This anthropologist’s name is Yang Liujin, and he worked as a town official during his fieldwork with the Mang. His book’s name is *Yige Xianwei renzhi de zuqun—mangren de guoqu he xianzai—shiliu nian genzong shicha yanjiu* 一个鲜为人知的族群-莽人的过去和现在—十六年跟踪实察研究 [An unknown group—the Mang people’s past and present—A sixteen-year fieldwork research].

However, one Mang villager's family history defies the perceived ascription of poverty to his people. Instead, his personal narrative emphasizes individual and family achievements. Chen is the tallest man among the Mang, and he works as the head of one of three Mang villages (Pinghe Village) after their relocation. Although the Mang are generally small and short (most of the Mang, regardless of being male or female, are shorter than five feet and three inches), Chen is as tall as six feet and thus cannot help but stand out. After the implementation of the Mang project, Chen became the village head of one of the new Mang villages. According to his account and according to the accounts of other villagers, Chen grew up in a well-off family; his father owned many oxen. Villagers have mentioned to me that even when most Mang people had nothing to eat, Chen's family were so affluent that they never faced starvation.

Nevertheless, under the framework of the Mang project, Chen and his family were re-defined as poor people in the same way as other Mang villagers. In the eyes of the government, all of the Mang, regardless of their social and economic standing within the village, were considered to be at risk of starvation in the absence of government help.

In this way, individual achievements such as that of Chen's family, was completely ignored. Official accounts leave out individuals and individual achievements because these achievements would seem to grant the peripheral people agency, which state agents might prefer to assign only to themselves under the ideology of civilization. In this ideology, the Mang could not eliminate poverty by themselves, and only the government could guide and lead the Mang to achieve the so-called social progress from the primitive to socialist society. Thus, life stories and family histories, such as that of Mr. Chen, were silenced in official history. As a result, barrenness and poverty remain a wide characterization of borderlands and border-landers.

## The Mang as an Unidentified Ethnic Minority

In the Chinese national order, the Mang used to be categorized as China's unidentified ethnic minorities. After the fifty-fifth minority ethnicity was finally acknowledged in 1981 (most of fifty-five minority ethnicities were recognized after the ethnic classification projects first concluded at the end of 1950s),<sup>41</sup> there were many ethnic minority people left outside of the officially recognized ethnicities. These have been called unidentified ethnic minorities in China, and they include, for instance, the Khmu people and the Mang people in Yunnan, and the Chuanqing people in Guizhou Province.<sup>42</sup>

According to China's national census in 2000, fifty-five ethnic minorities make up 8.41% of the Chinese population, while the majority Han people account for 91.53%. In this census report, the remaining 0.06% of population are categorized as unidentified ethnicities. In China, among the 734,438 unidentified ethnic minority people in total, most reside in mountain areas of southwestern provinces such as Guizhou and Yunnan. In recent years, news reports in these areas on unidentified ethnic minorities have been capturing public attention, and the Mang is one of these groups.

In addition, as a cross-border ethnic group, the Mang have relatives in Vietnam, who share with the Mang in China the same language and similar customs. This related ethnic group in Vietnam is called the Mảng. Although the Mảng living in the mountains of Vietnam has been one of fifty-four official ethnicities of Vietnam since 1979,<sup>43</sup> the Mang people of China had no

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<sup>41</sup> See Michaud, 2009: "By 1959, the *shaoshu minzu* [ethnic minorities] were officially classified into 51 groups occupying 64% of the national territory. This number of minority groups was pushed to 53 in 1963, before stabilizing at 55 in 1981. Since then, the authorized list of 55 *shaoshu minzu*, plus the Han, has served as the basis for all official research and publications on nationalities in the PRC." (p.30)

<sup>42</sup> See Yan, 2009. His data is based on China Statistical Annual 2000, Guizhou Ethnic Population, and Census Data of China 2000 (1<sup>st</sup> Volume).

<sup>43</sup> See Michaud, 2009. "[F]ollowing the Chinese example yet again, ethnological studies of the national minorities gravitated almost obsessively around the issue of classification. The first exhaustive list of

political status until 2009, when the Chinese government relocated them, and formally integrated the Mang into the Bulang ethnicity, regardless of the fact that the Mang and the Bulang are very different. Geographically, the Mang and the Bulang are living far away from each other in different mountain areas in Yunnan; and linguistically, they have so different ethnic languages that they could hardly understand each other. In spite of these incongruences, the government integrated the Mang into the Bulang in order to grant the Mang the political status of officially recognized ethnic minorities and hence give them social aid and welfare according to ethnic minority policies. That the Mang could not be recognized as an independent ethnicity is mainly because of the rigid “fifty-six-minzu model” based on the Ethnic Classification Project of 1954.<sup>44</sup> After the fifty-sixth ethnicity was finally acknowledged in 1981, the expression of “fifty-six ethnicities” serves as a fact that can hardly be changed, or challenged. Thus, the government’s act of granting the Mang ethnic minority status, not under their own ethnic name, but under that of Bulang, could be understood as an extension and renewal of “fifty-six-minzu model” in today’s situation.

Now, the Mang need to identify themselves as Bulang in public, in interviews<sup>45</sup>, and in official documents such as citizenship identity cards and household registers. In the context of how they identify and group themselves, and considering their language differences and other cultural aspects, this imposed integration is preposterous. In my conversation with villagers during my stay in the Mang villages, some Mang people implicitly criticized it in a joking way:

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minorities in the DRVN had been proposed in 1959 which included 64 ethnic groups. A second one followed in 1973, with 59. By 1979, under the leadership to *Tây* state ethnologist Be Viet Dang, the official total of 54 nationalities (*dân tộc*—including the Kinh nationality) was finally established. Much as is the case in China and for comparable reasons, this quasi-sacred figure has not changed since.” (p.32)

<sup>44</sup> Mullaney did a good study on the Ethnic Classification Project and “fifty-six-minzu model” in his book *Coming To Terms With the Nation* (2004).

<sup>45</sup> After the Mang project in 2009, many reporters of media went to the Mang villages and included the interviews with the Mang people in their documentary of the Mang project.

“Our Mang people *are* now Bulang people although we had no knowledge of the Bulang, and never met any Bulang people in our lives.” This humorous attitude indicated that the compulsory identity of Bulang ethnicity was internally disputed among the Mang even though there was scarcely any open objection or resistance against it. In this context, I regard the Mang project as one of the critical moments of a wider political process that is shaping the Mang’s identities.

In the course of the Mang project, the Chinese media, serving as the mouthpiece of the CCP and government, never fail to refer to the Mang as “primitive people” needing government aid and oversight. They further justified the relocation project in ascribing the Mang with alien traits: as people who hunted or faced starvation, spoke Mang language only, and with mysterious customs and primitive methods of healing.

In this context, the body of the Mang was further associated with poverty, dirt, and disease. Under the state’s ideology of civilization and cleanliness, relocation was implemented as a solution for the sake of physical well-being. Health and diseases thus became the “depolicitizers”<sup>46</sup> in this highly political project. I regard the Mang project as a highly political project because the government’s project of granting the Mang ethnic minority status, interwoven with the relocation, involved much more than the simple act of conferring a citizenship identity card; rather it entailed concerted efforts to modernize their housing and life, and to integrate them into Chinese society through government welfare systems.

Dispersed in the borderland in high mountains with such a small population, the Mang might seem a role model for those practicing the “art of not being governed.”<sup>47</sup> In James Scott’s story of Zomia (Southeast Asian highlands including Yunnan Province of China), the Mang

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<sup>46</sup> Zola, 1972, p.500.

<sup>47</sup> Scott, 2009.



could be an example of intractable people who were difficult to govern until the 1950s thanks to their “state-evasive” mountain homeland.

The Mang lived an extremely secluded life until 1957, when the new Chinese Communist government persuaded them to settle in permanent locations.<sup>48</sup> Scott attributes Zomian people’s reduced ability to avert state-building to the rapid development of “distance-demolishing technologies” that have been developed in recent decades. There is some validity to his argument in this regard, but in the next chapter, I would like to instead examine how hygiene and medical care are employed in poverty-alleviation projects to serve state-building in the modern history of the borderlands.

Similar to the settlement of mountain people in the 1950s that transformed them from the stereotyped “barbarians” of the past to poor people, recent poverty-alleviation projects, including the Mang project, are shaping a new model of border citizens. Upon moving them into state-built houses, the government compelled the Mang to comply with Chinese regulations and hygienic practices, taught by cadres arranged to live with them. In addition, they came to be entangled in the politics of economic activities in the mountain development. Thus, the relocation not only changed the Mang’s landscape and living patterns, but also became a project of modernizing people’s bodies through the altering of bodily practices, economic spheres, and socialities. By extension, the community becomes steeped in the general aspiration and desire for progress and development. The government’s project of recognizing the Mang as an official ethnic minority involved much more than the simple act of conferring a citizenship identification card; rather it entailed concerted efforts to modernize them and include them into Chinese society politically, economically as well as culturally and medically.

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<sup>48</sup> Yang, 2004, p.239.

## Chapter 3 Hygiene

Hygiene has been used as a colonial strategy to construct modern subjects around the world.<sup>49</sup> In Chinese urban areas, the concept of hygiene has been an indispensable part of public health to Chinese people since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Japanese bureaucrats, late Qing reformers, Guomindang modernizers, and Communist cadres all had sought to produce “new citizens through the inculcation of new modes of decorum and cleanliness.”<sup>50</sup>

However, the hygienic project deployed for the Mang people was different from these previous attempts. According to Rogaski’s historical analysis, in the 1930s, Chinese people’s active practice of hygiene was closely related to their own desire for modernity,<sup>51</sup> while in the 1950s, the communist Patriotic Hygiene Movement, although still maintaining the ideal of hygienic modernity, differed as it entailed mass mobilization through appeal to nationalism against the U.S. invasion.<sup>52</sup> In the case of the Mang, set in rural areas and free from any imperialist threat, the hygienic program of the Mang project instead falls in the sphere of domestic governing. In other words, it is part of the expansion and enhancement of Chinese state-building in mountain areas in the borderland that are far away from the central authorities. In addition, labels such as hygiene improvement and poverty alleviation are remarkable “depoliticizers” and essentially parts of state-making projects imposed on ethnic minorities. Although the relocation project officially is claimed to be for the sake of poverty alleviation,

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<sup>49</sup> For Africa, see Burke’s book “Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women”; for Southeast Asia, see Taylor and Van Kijk’s edited book “Cleanliness and Culture in Indonesian histories.”

<sup>50</sup> Rogaski, 2004, p.299.

<sup>51</sup> See Rogaski, 2004, Chapter 8.

<sup>52</sup> See Rogaski, 2004, Chapter 10.

under this putative aim, it actually took on the project of shaping a modern identity based on a new model of border citizens.

### **The Concept of “Weisheng”**

*Today this term is variously rendered into English as ‘hygiene,’ ‘sanitary,’ ‘health,’ or ‘public health.’ Before the nineteenth century, weisheng was associated with a variety of regimes of diet, meditation, and self-medication that were practiced by the individual in order to guard fragile internal vitalities. With the arrival of armed imperialism, some of the most fundamental debates about how China and the Chinese could achieve a modern existence began to coalesce strongly around this word. Its meaning shifted away from Chinese cosmology and moved to encompass state power, scientific standards of progress, the cleanliness of bodies, and the fitness of races. The persistent association of weisheng with questions of China’s place in the modern world has inspired me to translate it as ‘hygienic modernity.’*

*Although in many occurrences weisheng can (and should) be translated simply as ‘hygiene/hygienic’ or ‘sanitation/sanitary,’ its pervasive presence in Chinese society indicates a significance beyond the mere concern for cleanliness that is conveyed by these terms in contemporary American English.*

*-- Rogaski, 2004, Hygienic Modernity*

In her book about “weisheng,” Rogaski translates this Chinese word as “hygienic modernity” and recounts its origin from the Chinese philosophy of “guarding life” and the Japanese translation of this concept, which was later picked up by the Chinese people who related it to modern subjectivity and modernity. In this thesis, I attend to the Mang interpretations of their hygienic modernity, which signifies a boundary between the past and their

present. Their expression of “much more *weisheng* than before” is used to describe the Mang’s current conditions. “*Bu weisheng*” (to be unhygienic) has come to be considered as defining their past, which was embodied in their old houses.

Older Mang houses, like those of many mountain people in the past, were made of bamboo and wood, along with asbestos shingles in more recent times. Compared with the houses built with concrete, this kind of old houses, although dangerous to live in especially given the frequent floods in these mountain areas, were relatively easy and much more feasible to build for these mountain people who used to have access only to materials from the forests.

Since the late 1990s, more and more mountain villagers in the Southwest China, after earning some money, began to live in houses built with bricks and tiles, but the Mang, living in the deep mountains in a secluded way, lived in their old houses until 2009. In the old houses, the Mang cooked food on the fireplaces and sat around the fire to warm themselves and smoke. Also, many rituals used to be practiced around the fire. But fire and smoke made the houses dark with soot. Both the Mang today and other people from the outside now say that they think the old houses were grossly *bu weisheng*.

In my conversations with some young villagers, they said that their own peoples’ old houses were terribly broken-down, cold, and unclean, that their previous life was extremely poor. I heard them frequently using the terms such as “dirty,” “poor,” “*bu weisheng*,” “in the past,” and “when we were in the old mountains (*lao lin*)” interchangeably when they talked about their life before relocation. From these interviews, I discerned how young people further associated *bu weisheng* with “poverty,” and they explicitly expressed they did not need to live that kind of life anymore after the implementation of the poverty-alleviation project.

To me, these statements sounded more like their real sentiment rather than merely the parroting of government slogans and terms. Though it is difficult to assess whether or not they were simply parroting or were influenced by government terms for promoting *weisheng*, the youth adamantly conveyed these sentiments on poverty and uncleanness as their own opinions and reflections on their experience of living in two different spaces. By relating to the past and poverty with *bu weisheng*, and by trying to practice *weisheng* in new houses, such as sweeping the floor, the young people seemed to distance themselves from their past so as to obtain for themselves, as other ethnic minorities in mountains and as their friends in the town, a position in the new order of the modern world. Hygienic modernity became the means of creating the boundary between the past and the present, distinctions between their poverty and progress.

At present, in the government-built houses, there are no fireplaces (*huotang*). Instead, houses are equipped with electricity and tap water. For the hygienic consideration and purportedly also for the sake of pleasing visual arrangements, kitchens and living rooms are separated areas in the new houses, which are made of brick and cement.

These new houses could be seen as the ideal embodiment of hygienic modernity. However, people witness contradictions in the association of their past with *bu weisheng*. For example, the old houses, although seen as dirty, did not attract flies at all, since the smoke from the fire dispelled flies. In contrast, the new houses that the government built, considered cleaner and more hygienically modern, actually attract flies in great numbers in all the rooms. Some villagers think it might be meat that is attracting flies. Since the old houses were stilt houses that were raised on piles over the surface of the ground, most dirty stuff would drop through the floor made of bamboos and out of the house. In contrast, in the new houses made of concrete and in

which people cook in the kitchen but eat in the living room, there is no smoke to expel flies and all the food falling down from table is on the cement floor which is easy to attract many flies.



Figure 3 Sticky Paperboard that villagers bought to deal with flies problems

Since the verdict “free of flies” is fundamentally important in most projects that involve a public health concern,<sup>53</sup> this flies problem of supposedly “hygienic” houses contests the ideal of hygienic modernity that is maintained by the government and in the official reports of the Mang project. Nevertheless, young people’s perceptions remain, namely that the new houses are

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<sup>53</sup> See Redfield, 2013, p.17.

cleaner, the new villages are more orderly, and their life is more possessed of hygienic modernity than before. Their conception and lived experience of hygienic modernity are contingent on this relocation project.

## **Hygienic Governance**

As mentioned earlier, upon moving the Mang into state-built houses in three permanent villages, cadres were sent to villages to live with the Mang and regulate the Mang's everyday life. These resident cadres compelled the Mang to comply with Chinese regulations, morals, and hygienic practices. For example, after moving into the new houses, the Mang were required to sweep their floors with a broom every day, and they learned the new process of cooking food in their new kitchens. Resident cadres also organized weekly classes for the Mang on how to practice hygiene. Such changes relate to the concept of *weisheng* that the cadres wanted to teach villagers to observe as part of their hygienic practices. In this context, *weisheng* is beyond the embodiment in government-built houses.

The government cadres who lived with the Mang in the village could intervene in every detailed aspect of the Mang's life, through inspection, supervision, and education. Resident cadres not only mediated disputes and quarrels among the Mang, they also organized weekly classes for the Mang on how to behave in a civil manner and how to practice hygiene. I did not have the opportunity to observe these classes, but read about them from the meeting records of these classes in resident cadres' office when I first visited the Mang villages in February of 2011. Based on these notes and records, I interviewed these resident cadres and learned some details of their work in the Mang villages. When I re-visited the Mang villages two years later in the summer of 2013, resident cadres had already left for good after their service in the Mang villages



for two years since 2009. Thus, I investigated cadres' interventions and involvement in the villagers' life both from my conversations with resident cadres in 2011 and with individual villagers in 2013.

Resident cadres once took detailed charge of checking the Mang people's personal hygiene. For instance, resident cadres in each of three Mang villages made specific regulations and punishment to regulate the Mang's personal practices, such as making sure they take showers, trim their nails, and make the bed after getting up. If the Mang people did not do these things according to the regulations, they would be fined.

I regard these as a kind of hygienic governance since the Mang people's everyday behaviors, emotions, comportment and the like were disciplined. In this sense, in the new villages, the Mang were subject to what Foucault termed "panopticism"—a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form of surveillance.<sup>54</sup> The cadres' surveillance was not only to regulate the health and moral behavior of the entire Mang, it also called for a standard set of public behaviors of all villagers who used to be ascribed with alien traits and practices. In this sense, practicing *weisheng* is gradually associated with being ethical. Thus, the concept of hygiene was used by the government as a means of constructing ethically resonant persons in the borderlands in hygienic terms.

In another sense, since the hygiene is propagandized as general and beneficial practice with which the every Chinese people should comply, it functions as defining measure of the relative "Chineseness" for those people who had long been unidentified minorities in the borderlands in order to reconstitute them as Chinese. The concept of hygiene was used by the government as a means to integrate the Mang into Chinese, a transformative project to convert the Mang from mobile border-landers to permanent border citizens under the government's

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<sup>54</sup> Lock, 2004, p.117.



regulation. Also, this governance regulated Mang personal practices, and in doing so, brought them into the public sphere, which means that the cross-border community and their activities became more permeable to the state.

But, the function of these cadres should not be simply reduced to state agents. These cadres were sent from local governments of township, and most of them were in their early thirties. They came to the villages because of orders from the authorities above them; on the other hand, they also needed this kind of experience of working in remote areas for their personal career advancement and promotion in the future. Half of these resident cadres were ethnic minorities, but they are highly “Han-ized,” which means their identities as ethnic minorities were no longer noticeable. Instead, they claimed themselves as, and also were generally regarded by the villagers as, government cadres who were trying to accomplish their task to help the Mang to get used to “modernized” life in new village.

These cadres showed great enthusiasm in what they understood to be helping the Mang to live a better lifestyle in compliance with the government’s beautiful picture of ethnic minorities’ life. They might have had a heart for the work at the beginning, but they failed to keep this heart when they were losing confidence in achieving villagers’ hygienic modernity. Instead, they had their own grievances and complaints about the Mang’s intractable bad hygiene because the cadres felt that they were trying hard to correct the Mang’s bad habits for the Mang’s benefit. In fact, one could argue that after years of living together with the Mang, the cadres developed affection for the Mang. On the other hand, although the Mang had some reliance on the cadres in some aspects, some of the Mang people resented them or did not like them at all because cadres forbade the Mang to drink too much alcohol, a practice that the Mang enjoyed and held dear, especially since drinking helped facilitate social relations among the people.

For example, I learned about Chen's family history when Chen and Luo were drinking at dinner. Mountain villagers such as the Mang, especially the old people, were tongue-tied in interviews when I asked them questions; however, they would share many stories (oral history, myth, criticism) when they were drinking, a phenomenon Magnus Fiskesjö, an anthropologist working extensively in the field in China and Southeast Asia, also encountered in his analysis of the social life of the Wa in the borderlands between China and Burma.<sup>55</sup> He calls his own participation and research in the act of drinking "participant intoxication."

On the issue of the Mang's drinking practice, some Mang people did agree with banning alcoholism, since it has long been a problem that many Mang did nothing but drink all day at home. During my stay at two Mang villages in the summer of 2013, there were two funerals, one of a young man in his early 30s and one of an older man around 50. According to their families and other villagers, both of them died because of drinking too much alcohol.

From this perspective, cadres' efforts to prohibit alcoholism could be considered mostly for the Mang's health and benefits although limiting the Mang's drinking practice was an oppressive form of hygienic governance. Resident cadres said they wanted every villager to farm and work instead of drinking and staying home drunk. In the resident cadres' opinions, the Mang were too lazy and they never tried hard to make money or to sustain themselves on their own. In addition, some better-off villagers began to lament, as they increasingly do, the laziness of drunken villagers who do little besides living on government money. Yet, from another perspective, drinking, to some extent, could be a very evasive action for the old Mang people to take towards new practices imposed on the villagers.

Similar observation can be found in Scott's book about the village workers in a Malaysian village (Sedaka), who were charged with lying, cheating, and laziness. Scott regards

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<sup>55</sup> See Fiskesjö, 2010.

these villagers' practices as everyday forms of peasant resistance, and draws on Mullin's analysis of slave "rebelliousness" to interpret their "laziness": "Speaking generally, their 'laziness,' boondoggling, and pilferage represented a *limited*, perhaps *self-indulgent* type of rebelliousness."<sup>56</sup> Different from the poor villagers in Sedaka, who were set in the impact of cropping and harvesting changes on their practices of local class conflicts, the Mang's label of laziness was in the context of a state poverty-alleviation project. But, it still can be argued that "lazy" practices function as a form of resistance, no matter how limited it is, against the hygienic governance or the government's initiative for economic development. Nevertheless, this kind of resistance, since in the form of alcoholism, which can be further associated with death, is easy to be blamed for its harm against health and guarding life.

To sum up, complicated politics of active and passive practices, in addition to the complex relationship between the cadres and the Mang, deny any reductionist statement that the cadres in the villages were oppressors. Resident cadres of the Mang project left for good at the end of 2011. But the profound impact emanating from their hygienic governing continues to influence Mang life. The Mang people's identities and sociality continue to be shaped through the practices of "weisheng"—more and more Mang people are actively practicing these regulated practices of hygiene to show their difference from the old people, in addition, they are accepting the values implicated in these hygienic practices, such as health, modernity, and progress. Meanwhile, drinking still plays an important role in the Mang's culture, tradition, and life—it is an indispensable practice when the Mang invited each other to their houses, and even a 13-year-old teenage girl can drink a dozen bottles of beer with no problem.

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<sup>56</sup> See Scott, 1985, p. 291, quoted from Mullin's book *Flight and Rebellion*, p.35.

## Hygienic Panorama

In addition to personal hygiene, the concept of public hygiene is embodied in the panoramic view of new villages. Here, engineering becomes the means to achieve hygienic modernity and aesthetics, and it also provides solutions to the problems of “bu weisheng.” In cities, “to be modern above ground required the construction of an alternate city under the ground, a city of pipes, drains, tanks, and gradients that would render wastes and water invisible.”<sup>57</sup> But, in mountain areas, because of the difficult topography, engineering of sanitation is rather restricted. Thus, the new construction, although carried out in the name of hygiene and environment improvement, were actually quick fixes, most of which did little good to people.

For example, the village paths built of cement are called “hygienic roads” since they are not as muddy as dirt roads to get on a rainy day. However, when put into practice, “hygienic roads” can hardly be considered clean at all since they became easily covered with dirty moss; and worse, many villagers have slipped and hurt themselves on these so-called “hygienic” roads.

Different from a panoramic view of the new villages and paths from a distance, this kind of bodily experience of living in the new villages is challenging the merits of hygiene as imposed here. Walking in the villages, I could not only see trash in the nearby bushes, frequently I also smelled the stench of used water flowing at the sides of the “hygienic” roads. However, looking at the rows of identical houses of the Mang villages from above, one might instead imagine that it would be nice to live in these houses of white walls surrounded by greens, basking in the sunshine.

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<sup>57</sup> See in Rogaski, 2004, p.193

To sum up, rather than fulfilling the practical goal of increasing sanitation, the new roads and neat arrangement of houses are more likely to visually exhibit a kind of order that valorizes a sense of national identity formulated as “hygiene.” Like engineering (not chemistry) and housing regulations/ public sanitary systems provided answers to the problems of public health in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (for example, urban sanitary movements in England and Germany, 1983-1914),<sup>58</sup> government-built houses like those of the Mang are closely related with the state’s public health agenda. Although some scholars (for example, Lin & Liu, 2010) argue that public health emerges not as a primary site of state building,<sup>59</sup> in the case of the Mang project, a kind of national identity is located in the vision of Chinese villages, in which Chinese villages, supposedly different from Vietnamese villages in the borderlands, are more hygienic and best representing and embodying the village ideal.



Figure 4. Longfeng Village

<sup>58</sup> See Rogaski, 2004, Chapter 3& 4.

<sup>59</sup> Lin and Liu argue that “[p]ublic health emerges not as a primary site of either colonial or postcolonial state building, but as a local instantiation of more globally diffused health policy projects.” See the “Introduction” by Charlotte Furth in “Hygienic Modernity in Chinese East Asia,” 2010, p.15.

Although the focus of this paper is not a detailed comparative study of spatial organization and visual arrangements of mountain villages in China and Vietnam, it would be very much possible to extend this kind of study into such a comparative project. According to my field investigation in the Vietnamese mountain villages on the border with Laos,<sup>60</sup> and my discussion with Vietnamese ethnologists who recently worked in the Mảng villages in Vietnam,<sup>61</sup> there are no neat rows of government-built houses for mountain villagers in rural Vietnam, which is very different from those in China.

Admittedly, the new Mang villages were well-planned visually, but they did not take into account the increase in households of the Mang, after relocation. New villages, different from the old villages without cement or blueprint, repress spatial expansion or other changes. As population increases, people have to live outside of the new village.

In retrospect, while every Mang family could have a new house for free when they were relocated in 2009, the government only built as many houses as for the households to be relocated at that time. Already after one or two years, when some family members needed to live apart after getting married and organize their new households in new separate houses, they could not live in the new village anymore, since there were no available house in the new village anymore. Also, it is hardly possible to build additional new houses in the new villages.

For one thing, villagers are unable to build exactly the same house as the government built; for another, the new village's space is not expansive. Since the new village's space is designed in a restrictively planned way, and the ground is covered with concrete roads, it is not easy to increase the number of buildings. In contrast, in the old villages, mountain people used to be free from space circumscriptions caused by a village ideal, and they could master their living

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<sup>60</sup> I visited Kỳ Sơn area of Nghệ An province in July of 2013.

<sup>61</sup> I asked Dr. Vi Van An of Vietnam Museum of Ethnology at Hanoi and Dr. Nguyen Thang of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

spaces as they needed and liked. If a son wanted to organize his own family and needed to build a house, he could do so without limitations such as governance and regulations. However, they can not do so anymore in the new villages.

Thus, they had to build shelters like their old houses next to the new villages. For example, near Longfeng village, there are six old houses newly built. One of them is Mr. Luo's younger brother's house. Unlike Mr. Luo, who married before the relocation and thus has a new house in the new village, his younger brother had to build a shelter with wood from forests and with help from other villagers when after relocation project he found a wife in Vietnam and had children. As Luo's younger brother moved out from his parent's house in the new village, he started a kind of hybrid life of the past and the present in his newly-built shelter. Although this kind of shelter is more like the Mang's old house than the new house, it is close enough to the new village's infrastructure to use electricity and watch TV. Although there is no tap water for each household of the six households in their new shelters, they managed to use tap water by linking a water tube from the water pipe of the new village. While these six families live in the shelters, they are trying to transfer and apply the benefits of living in the new village to their life outside of the new village.

To sum up, although it is difficult to evaluate or even measure how hygienic the new houses and new villages really are, both of them are "hygienic" in a visual way from outside or from a panoramic view. In the context of poverty-alleviation, hygiene became an important index of the larger social transformations associated with the progress of mountain villages, including adequate housing and improved health. The government created a model of hygienic life for mountain villagers, which was embodied in their new houses and forced practices informed by cadres' education on them, which have formative role in creating new border-

landers. However, contradictions of everyday experience of living in new villages make the ideal of hygienic modernity for mountain villagers increasingly elusive in a material way.



## Chapter 4 Healing: Pluralism and Pragmatism

The goal of this chapter is to place the Mang interpretation of their recent diseases and of modern biomedicine at the center of their experiences of life steeped in the ideal of health and progress.

In this chapter, I focus on the ways that the Mang understand and respond to the diseases in a new circumstance that forest taboos are losing power and herbal healing is spatially restricted. At the same time, biomedicine and hospitalization are not powerful solutions to all the diseases. In these circumstances, the modern medical treatments are pragmatically combined with their traditional healing. As their practices of seeking treatment diversify, the Mang people have learned to navigate their life in a pragmatic way. A plurality of agencies and processes involved in their health and healing practices as well as other parts of their life.

### Doctors and Diseases

*The Mang used to be very cautious of water use and water drinking. Old people had clear knowledge of what water to drink and what river to cross. Although the Mang's life was very difficult in the past, their illnesses were much less than now. They used to live far from each other in deep mountains. It was when people were living together that they began to have diseases. In the past, people died of starvation and accident of being crushed by something such as trees and rocks; not many people died because of illness. Since 1983, people have begun to go downhill to see doctors when they get ill.*

*-- Luo Jigao, former village head of the old Mang village*

In the memory of many Mang, many of their diseases used to be closely related with water. Luo Jigao told me that in the 1970s, the Mang once moved to a valley, but they moved back to deep mountains after an epidemic during which two or three people died every day. As

an afterthought, he guessed it was measles or leprosy, although people used to think the epidemic was caused by the changes of weather (hot and cold) and the waters near the valley.

According to another 20-year-old girl's recalling, she heard from her grandmother that there used to be a river with poisonous water in the mountain. Tumors grew in people's bodies after they drank the water from this river; in addition, something would grow on people's feet if they happened to step into this river. Besides the diseases related with water, she also said that she had measles when she was little. Although many children died because of this disease, she survived after receiving injections from a doctor.

According to Luo Jigao, it was in 1981 when a doctor coming back from the army took to treat Mang people, that the Mang began to believe in modern medicine and doctors. As part of the Mang project, the government built clinics in the new villages, where one or two doctors are working. These village doctors could only practice simple treatments, such as giving injections to the ill, but villagers could get medicine from these nearby clinics much more easily than accessing herbs in deep mountains.

Sometimes, soldiers and military surgeons stationed in the borderlands also visited the Mang villages and provided medical services to villagers. Once a year, or on the important Chinese festivals, such as the Spring Festival, soldiers would extend their greeting and care to the Mang by stopping by some Mang villagers' houses and providing a wide range of services, including seeing patients in the villages.<sup>62</sup> These military physicians took a long journey by car and on foot in order to provide free medical service for villagers in the marginal areas. It is true that soldier doctors, as mobile doctors who could quickly mobilize medical resources, brought care and cure for villagers who hardly had access to hospitals. However, once a year, these

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<sup>62</sup> These visiting soldiers also distributed food and quilts, and did maintenance check and repair on houses and electric equipment.

doctors came to villages not on the basis of medical emergency or needs, but, rather, for the purpose of presenting to the public their so-called “close relations” with the ethnic minorities in the borderlands. In the mountain villages, this was a contingent embodiment of state-making in a medical context.

### **Hospitalization and Healing**

As an anthropological study of African villages has shown, the fundamental sources of well-being is one’s relationship with others.<sup>63</sup> For the Mang, in a new environment where herbal healing is giving way to biomedicine, the Mang’s individual relations with each other as well as the healing power of the Mang community are, however, not losing their importance. The Mang hold deep faith in their traditional healing practices, and believe that when doctors in hospitals could not provide a clear answer to their illness, they would rather come back and stay at home, having herbs for healing. Although villagers are discarding taboos regarding diseases, death, and funeral, they still believe in the healing power residing in their community. After seeing doctors, they would seek and receive traditional treatment as well, such as the treatment of sucking out disease by a shaman. In this case, I would challenge the exclusive focus on mountain villagers’ lack of money accounting for their lack of medical treatment. Rather, I emphasize the retaining power of healing embedded in the relations among the villagers in their local community.

Ms Luo is the sister of Luo, the village head of Longfeng village. Her husband is Dao, the first Mang student sponsored by the government to study at and graduate from a technical secondary school. Since he held the highest degree in education at that time, he taught in the primary school in one of the old Mang villages. Now, Dao works as a cadre in the local

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<sup>63</sup> See in Jackson, 2011.

government of a township in Jinping, and both Ms Luo and Dao are living and working in the town. In the summer of 2013, Ms Luo came back to the Mang village and asked her brother to give her a ride to another Mang village, where a Mang healer could give her a treatment on her lung illness. Before she came back to the village, she had already received medical treatment in hospital for three months. Although she was taking pills after being discharged from the hospital, she still thought she needed to receive the traditional treatment for healing. Ms Luo claimed herself as the first Mang woman who had given birth to her children in hospital, and she took pride in this modernity. Nevertheless, she could not ignore the healing power of traditional treatment.

Nowadays, more and more mountain villagers are visiting hospitals: for example, Chen Zixin of the Longfeng village, who is in his forties. He said he was having bellyache, but he was not sure when I asked him if it was stomachache. He went to the hospital in the township of Jinping before, and the doctor suggested that he should have surgery. But, he did not have surgery, since everyone in the village as well as his family thought it was not a good idea. Instead, villagers suggested he had better buy some herbal medicine to heal by himself. Nonetheless, the pain was still torturing him. He showed me his medical records from hospital and the conclusion of ultrasonic examination he had in hospital in November of 2012. The conclusion showed that he suffered from a hepatolith.

Many people in the villages have similar problems. Not only Chen Zixin, also Luo Jigao and another teenage boy, told me that they as well as many other villagers had the similar problems such as gallstones and ureteral calculi. As many villagers have similar problems, they suspected these problems might be related with their drinking water in which there are many tiny grains of sand, and stones. The teenage boy chose to drink herbal medicine to heal; at the same

time he resorted to local shaman whose treatment was to suck people's illnesses out from their skins.

This traditional treatment by local shaman is special in two senses. First, it is a non-medical treatment, with neither biomedicine nor herbal. Second, it is such an economical practice that the healer only uses a piece of wood and a bowl of alcohol for twice a day, at sunrise and at sunset. However, the ill people usually need to live with the healer during the whole period of treatment for months, and most of them bring food and cook for the healer and his wife everyday during this period. Since the Mang's traditional treatment is non-medical, it indicates that this healing treatment draws power from something other than medicine. My assumption based on this indication is that the healing power of the Mang might be rooted in their regime of diet. However, their food consumption has been drastically changed, especially after the relocation project.

To villagers, it is not the nature of diseases but the meanings of diseases that matter. They embody their concern with water in their diseases, and record their past migration and living in a valley in their diseases as well. Also, their values are embodied in their diseases. For example, if a man died and he used to be drunk all the time, people, including the dead man's family, would think he died of drinking too much, rather than investigating or making clear what diseases he had before death.

Although the Mang had more and more contact with doctors as well as increasing experience in hospital, they are exploring plural approaches to achieving or restoring health. For instance, a Mang woman has heart and stomach diseases, and her daughter told me that her mother had been to many hospitals in towns and cities. The daughter said the doctors in hospital saved her mother's life, but her mother has not been healed yet. Thus, her mother has to stay at

home and take both herbal and biomedicine for healing. Meanwhile, the woman also wears a small amulet for the wish of protecting her from diseases.

Another example is Mr. Luo himself. As a father, he bought some medicine from clinics for his four-year-old daughter when she began to cough, at the same time, he bathed her in the warm water after being boiled with peach tree leaves. This is the traditional way for the Mang to heal or to prevent from illness. The water is dark brown, and the little girl bathed in the water in a big basin. This kind of pluralism is embedded in the health-reform campaigns in rural China.

Through the New Cooperative Medical System (NCMS),<sup>64</sup> the government, in addition to individual health care workers, is taking responsibility for Mang health expenses on medicine and medical treatment in hospital. This financial support might direct villagers' healing practices to move further away from the sphere of community in which traditional treatments are practiced, to clinics and hospitals sponsored by the government. For example, for now, few Mang women give birth to their children in hospital, but it can be predicted that more and more of them will go to hospital in the near future. For one reason, some of them took pride in their giving birth to babies in hospital, which embodies hygienic modernity. For the other reason, financial subsidy is encouraging them to follow suit.

This medical campaign for biomedicine and hospitalization in rural areas will easily lead to medicalized subjectivities of mountain villagers. Characterized as people who had historically lacked hygiene and medical services, mountain villagers have been incorporated into health-reform campaigns through poverty-alleviation projects. These campaigns are not only synonymous with the betterment of their life, but also an embodiment of socialism.

Consequently, "[t]he body figured prominently as the battleground for the deployment of

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<sup>64</sup> NCMS is medical welfare system in rural China in which the medical expenses are shared by individual villagers, local governments and the state.

strategies and policies to develop and expand an efficient public health system, one that required an increasing degree of state intervention, management, and protection and that reinforced the infrastructure and institutions necessary to create, regulate, and produce ‘governable subjects.’”<sup>65</sup>

### **Reflections: Progress and Loss**

Herbal healing is a crucial part of the traditional healing practices of mountain people, but since the relocation projects and the economic development of mountains, changes to the mountain landscape have limited the mountain people’s access to herbs for healing. Instead, the Mang have more access to biomedicine. Nevertheless, they are finding difficulty in responding to illness in their new circumstances. To some extent, the surrender to modernity and biomedicine leaves the Mang suspended between a lost past and a confusing present. Comparing my impressions from two field trips, I noticed that villagers have become increasingly confused by their recent illnesses. People are asking: Why are there more “strange diseases,” such as avian flu, than before? Why do they have more illnesses and have to take more medicine, when their lives are supposed to be better than before? Why did they not need to have doctors in the past? Their reflections imply the impotence of modern medicine. While the Mang people seem to have no categories that overlap with the concept of “weisheng”, according to their living memory of the past, the old Mang people in the past did not get sick as easily as in the present, and they rarely took medicine. It sounds as though the older Mang people used to have more vitality than today’s Mang people, although it is not clear what their ways of self-preservation used to be. In my perspective, by relating their recent illnesses to their increasing consumption of medicine, these villagers actually express their disorientation in their interaction with the outside world. It is not only diseases that are confusing to villagers but also their predicament in the modern

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<sup>65</sup> Brotherton, 2012, p.58.

world. In this context, the claim of benefits of hygiene, for example, in preventing disease or lengthening lifespan, became irrelevant. Mountain villagers are increasingly aware of the reality that the relocation and development dispossessed them of their land and limited their activities by changing their landscape. Thus, it is not only the access to herbals, but also their predicament of being stuck in a changing world, that matters. Therefore, I place their meanings of diseases and healing practices in a context of struggles about power and resources.

The government granted the Mang “land title certificates” after relocation. It might seem to help the villagers to legalize and justify their ownership of property. However, it actually disempowered the Mang by replacing mountain people’s natural possession of their lands and mountains by another system of property based on government’s regulation. Even worse, the Mang people of Pinghe village completely lost the possession of their mountains in this process. According to the villagers’ words, they had to sell their mountains to a businessman as an exchange for miles of concrete roads to the new village. Although villagers did not want to sell their mountains, because of the local government’s and village committee’s interventions they were compelled to do so under the government’s ideal of poverty-alleviation and its emphasis on the primary role of transportation and road building in the economic development in mountain areas. In these ways, mountain villagers’ use of their lands is not only regulated but also restricted. Furthermore, this process is actually commodifying villagers’ lands and mountains. The certificates, in a sense, make it possible and to some extent, encourage villagers to sell their mountains to businessmen for money. By extension, this process of land commodification implicates subsequent process of labor commodification of villagers, who are paid by hour to work on the lands that they had to sell to businessmen.



For example, Luo helped a man to take care of his cornfields. This man used to work in the local township government, but he quit his job and contracted lands from villagers to plant corn and banana. Luo was helping this man because Dao, Luo's brother-in-law, was the business partner with this man. As village head, Luo also could help them to hire more villagers to weed and spray insecticide in their contract fields.

Relocation is still going on. The biggest move recently was in the May of 2012 when the Chinese government launched a huge poverty-alleviation project in Guizhou province with a gargantuan task: to move two million people out of the mountains. This project aims to realize the resettlement of these two million people to the edge of urban areas in Guizhou by the year of 2020 as a way of boosting the economy and poverty alleviation at the same time.<sup>66</sup> This implied that the wider process of land commodification through relocation was ongoing as part of an overall policy for poverty-alleviation and urbanization, and there is more yet to come. In 2014, after the first batches of villagers moved into the government-built houses in June of 2013, relocated villagers are complaining, “[the] house is fine. But if you have a house to live in and can’t feed yourself, what’s the point?”<sup>67</sup> Living in the “neat rows of freshly painted apartment blocks,” far away from their lands and mines, relocated villagers complained that they were being fooled—the government did not provide them jobs as promised (government officials have only provided a few days’ training on smarter farming and had offered work at a construction site where the pay villagers considered is too low).<sup>68</sup> However, “[t]here is no way to go back and farm.” “It is too far away, the land has not been cultivated, the farming tools are gone, the

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<sup>66</sup> *The Telegraph*, November 2012.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/9648698/Two-million-to-be-moved-in-one-of-largest-relocations-in-Chinese-history.html>, last accessed April 1, 2014.

<sup>67</sup> *South China Morning post*, March 2014. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1441004/plight-chinas-relocated-poor-highlights-partys-development-dilemma>, last accessed April 1, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

houses have been dug up.”<sup>69</sup> In addition, “[s]everal said they missed the security of growing their own food. Just in case, Zhang and his wife, who heaved a basket packed with vegetables up four flights of stairs to their flat, have filled one of their three bedrooms with giant sacks of rice.”<sup>70</sup>

The Mang also have some reflections on the changes in their food consumption. As mentioned before, resident cadres taught the Mang new ways of cooking food. They taught the Mang how to cook with salad oil and to put more condiments in their cooking. Villagers agreed that these made food taste delicious, and more and more villagers began to follow these cooking practices as long as they can afford them. Since the Mang used to mainly boil vegetables in water as meals and did not use bottled cooking oil before, the government distributed buckets of cooking oil to the Mang when they first moved into the new houses. However, many old people did not use them at all, thus some other villagers came to buy the oil from these old people at lower price than that at market.

Now, the Mang not only began to use oil bought from the market, but also put more seasonings such as monosodium glutamate (MSG) into their culinary process. In addition, their consumption of meat is on the rise. This phenomenon indicates the change of their food structure. Also, the Mang increasingly applied insecticide to their food planting. For instance, during the season of rice transplanting in the summer, there is always a person in charge of spraying insecticide in the fields.

While the Mang believe that they eat much better than before, they find that they have more “strange diseases” even though they are consuming a bigger amount of and a greater variety of food and nutrition. This change is very drastic and quick—even many teenagers still remember that the Mang used to eat corn meal in the past. They did not have too much food and

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

thus had to collect corn and to ground corn kernels into powder. Thereafter, they could steam the corn powder as rice. Not only corn meal, the Mang also used to drink alcohol made of corn. Since they could not make much corn wine by themselves at home in the past, they used to drink very little. However, now, the Mang have money and easy access to a village shop to buy wine. Thus, they frequently drink to a great extent. In addition, Mang food consumption is becoming diversified, and cooking much more complicated than before.

Not only their food practices, but also their animal husbandry and breeding practices have changed dramatically. There is an old lady of the Longfeng village who keeps staying in an old Mang house even after the relocation, and her reason for living in the old house is to raise her chickens. Different from the chickens kept in cages in the new villages and fed by villagers with chemical fodder, the old lady's chickens eat rice bran and grow slowly. The old lady's house is located a bit above the six shelters next to the new village. Although no one can tell why this old Mang house could be preserved until now, this is the only old house that survived the relocation project.

Since it is cold to sleep in the old house full of leakages, and also it is dangerous to stay in the shabby old house in the dark because mud-rock flow and mountain torrents might come in night, the old lady goes to sleep in the new house of her son's in the new village in the evening. But, in the daytime, she insists staying in her old house with her cat and chickens. In doing so, she is trying to separate her original mountain chickens from the hybrid chickens raised by villagers to sell for money. The difference between these two kinds of chickens could imply the divergence of the Mang from their past life.

Another change was that in the government-built houses, there are no fireplaces in the living room. For the hygienic consideration and for the sake of pleasing visual arrangements,

kitchens and living-room areas are separated in the new houses. As a result, without the fireplaces, the Mang tradition of sitting around the fire is lost. The fireplaces used to be for family gathering and education (*huotang jiaoyu*) in the evening when there was no electricity in mountain villages. The Mang tradition was to sit around the fire, smoking and talking after having food on the fire. Since there is only electricity and TV in the new houses, the Mang now watch TV late into the night instead of engaging with one another in talking around the fire. TV becomes the gateway for Mang children to the outside world, and the children become acquainted with the outside world from watching TV. Consequently, they lost the tradition of listening to the older people telling their myths, history, and stories around the fireplace in the dark in the evening. In this way, their histories become silenced in the new houses.

Luo, the head of Longfeng village, is very alert to this decline of the Mang culture and traditions in recent years. He has a wish that he could build an exhibition room of Mang history and culture, and he emphasizes that the Mang especially need exhibition of objects to represent its history and culture for their children because the Mang have no written language. He believes that for a small group of ethnic minorities without written language, their history can best be represented in their objects.

Making history is a formative process. By telling their family histories, past memories, myth and old stories, people fashion their identities in a particular way, “constructing a ‘self’ for public consumption.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the significance of objects lies in their being used as a vehicle for constructing identities and interpreting their lives in a particular way. By extension, possessions are not only regarded as individual achievements; they also imply the power and resources of the owners. Official accounts record border-landers’ poverty rather than their possessions, thus dispossessing the peripheral people of their power. Furthermore, by moving

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<sup>71</sup> See Waterson, 2007, p.1.

mountain villagers from their previous living spaces into new houses, the government actually dispossessed them of their old land and, in addition, deprived them of their previous customary mobility and autonomy.

After relocation, the government sent cadres to teach the Mang new methods of agricultural production, and forbade slash-and-burn in mountain areas. Agricultural patterns can become part of people's self-identity.<sup>72</sup> Since shifting cultivation is identified as a typical agriculture of border-landers, by dislocating them from their familiar living environment and teaching them new farming practices, the government took up another project of instilling a new identity of modernity and order into mountain villagers' life. It goes against their traditional identities based on possessions and residence in their traditional land.

To sum up, personal histories based on objects, different from the state's political agenda of integrating or transforming the border-landers, generate subjectivity in the process of their storytelling, in which the Mang can reconstruct their identities differently from some stereotypes. The difference between the histories told by individuals and those written under the state's ideology, indicates a tension in which people did not challenge or resist the state's imposition, but negotiate with it by telling oral histories. This making of history functions as a means for mountain people to generate power by transcending historical generalization and imposition. In the Mang project, when people need to reconstruct their identities as recognized ethnic minorities helped by the state and government, Chen resorted to telling family history to keep the Mang's achievements in people's memory, and Luo plans to collect objects used by the Mang to represent their identities.

However, from another perspective, Luo's proposal for preserving the Mang culture by building an exhibition room also indicates a potentially deep change of the Mang community.

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<sup>72</sup> O'Connor, 1995.

The exhibition room, like a museum, is a modern representation of viewing a culture. In this way, culture and tradition need to be put into words rather than being told from the bodily dispositions hidden in everyday life and practices. This shift in cultural representation implies ongoing changes in the Mang's bodily comportment at different variations and levels.

Afraid that it would be too late, Luo wants to build the exhibition room of the Mang cultural objects as soon as possible. However, few people are interested in his project. Nevertheless, more and more villagers, especially young people, are actively participating in a wide range of economic activities, and some of them left mountains for cities or towns. To some extent, their relations with the community or group are changing or weakening. Young people are exploring other avenues other than engaging in village life in order to become “a person of substance,”<sup>73</sup> such as acquiring money, and they try to achieve on new paths to attain values and adulthood. While displaying general enthusiasm for economic development and progress in mountain areas as a whole, villagers complain about specific issues like inconsistent water supply and dispossession of lands after relocation in this process. They want to make money as much as possible, however, they distrust the intrusions of “progress” into their lives. For instance, whereas some villagers exchanged their land for money with businessmen and government officials, they are worried that they would have no place in their mountains for burying people since mountains are increasingly covered with tress cultivated for logging and cash crops owned by businessmen. In conclusion, the Mang reflections on their everyday life indicate their complicated attitudes towards progress and their predicament.

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<sup>73</sup> Jackson, 2011, p.91.

## Chapter 5 Conclusions

From goods distribution to relocation, poverty-alleviation projects in socialist China since the 1950s can signify increasing state power and intervention in the borderlands. Yet, health and hygiene functioned as “depoliticizers” of these state projects in the way that relocation was operated as a solution for the sake of villagers’ well-being, under the state’s ideology of civilization, cleanliness, and modernization. For example, new villages and new houses are considered cleaner and more hygienically modern, and the idea is that the Mang would live a more healthy life in the new houses than before. Hence, the government’s project of granting the Mang ethnic minority status, interwoven with the relocation, involved much more than the simple act of conferring a citizenship identity card; rather it entailed concerted efforts to modernize their lives, and to integrate them into Chinese society through welfare programs such as relocation and NCMS. As the Chinese government and media further justified the relocation by ascribing alien traits to the Mang, as people who practice primitive methods of healing and mysterious customs, they actually associated Mang poverty extensively with dirt and disease.

The Mang project is thus part of a wider political and economic process of state-making that is shaping the course of villagers’ lives. It is an unprecedentedly complicated process of state-making in which the government initiated border-landers’ increasing engagement with biomedicine and, more importantly, economic activities contingent on government and business investment. Thus, in the intersecting discourses of health, hygiene, and healing, the Mang project turns out to be structuring spaces over bodies and forming subjectivities within bodies in the new villages as well as in multiple processes, which result in a new model of citizenship that is influenced by the everyday circumstances of life in the new spatial arrangements.

Diverse forms of hygienic governance are integrating mobile border-landers into the Chinese population through regulation and discipline but in the name of progress and health, and myriad meanings of *weisheng* are located in the borderlands. Considering the historical process of border-landers' identities from primitive to poor people, *weisheng* is associated with the Mang's place in the national order and social order. Under poverty-alleviation campaigns, "weisheng" transformed mountain villages and villagers' living spaces. Also, it became a central term through which resident cadres regulated the villagers' mundane practices. For the Mang people, *weisheng* could be either the boundary between their past and the present, or embodied in their new houses. These new meanings of *weisheng* among mountain villagers reflect the underlying social changes in rural China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Villagers harness the space where history intersects with personal experience to give accounts of their understanding of hygienic modernity, and more importantly, their understandings of life and their situations.

Inherently and internally, the state is concerned with resources development as well as political stability in the borderlands. To make a step further, the Mang project is not only concerned with granting the Mang the status of officially recognized ethnic minorities and hence of being further integrated the Mang into Chinese society and the national order, but also for it results in the state's increasing access to mountain resources. In mountain areas, state projects and business investments, in which development functions as an "anti-politics machine,"<sup>74</sup> did not bring villagers the economic gains they expected, but dispossessed them of land and disempowered them by resettling them into (supposedly more favorable) lowland areas. Since *bu weisheng* is related to poverty, and the civilizational discourse of hygiene justifies the state's

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<sup>74</sup> Ferguson, 1990.



intervention, poverty-alleviation projects such as the Mang project do serve state-building in the borderlands through relocation with a pinpoint of *weisheng*. From another perspective, relocation and the re-structuring of their living environments actually lead to the diminution of mountain villagers' power and control of their lands. As a result, increasing lands of mountain villagers are being exchanged for money between businessmen, government officials, and villagers. In this way, the state increases its power of controlling mountain areas and disciplining mountain people. The multiplicity of ethnic minority policies, poverty-alleviation policies, economic development policies as well as interactions among officials and villagers embodied borderlanders' unique experience under the campaigns of progress and development in China.

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